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ABSTRACT

Readers need to be encouraged to combine prior knowledge with information gained from the text and then try to predict what will happen later in the text. The overhead projector is a valuable tool for enhancing instruction involving prediction. The process of gradually revealing text to a group of students, eliciting their predictions, evaluating their predictions, and then either confirming or gently refuting these predictions is a valuable learning activity. A short selection with an easily followed story line is recommended for this exercise. Preparation of transparencies requires obtaining a good clear copy of the material. Mounting the transparencies allows the transparency to lay flat on the projection surface glass, allows for a sharper image to be presented, and the mount provides space for writing notes concerning the transparency. Overhead transparencies need to be protected and stored in a manner that will permit efficient retrieval. The use of good reading materials presented on well-prepared overheads provides a rich instructional base for enhancing prediction competencies. (MG)

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Strengthening Prediction Competencies in Reading Through Using an Overhead Projector

Rudolph P. Miller and Edward J. Dwyer

Reading is no longer considered a passive activity but rather an active interaction between reader and author. The reader is engaged in constructing meaning using the actual text and what he or she knows from experiences (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson, 1985). In this light, Haggard (1988), based on the earlier work of Stauffer (1969), highlighted the importance of encouraging readers to combine prior knowledge gained from their own experiences with information gained from the text and then try to predict what will occur later in the text. In such a view, readers make predictions then read to determine whether the predictions were correct. Teachers make no judgements concerning value of predictions but rather "concentrate on follow-up probe questions that assist students in articulating the reasons, logic, and evidence for their predictions" (Haggard, p. 528). In a more formal manner, Smith (1988) described as the "prior elimination of unlikely alternatives" (p. 311).

Smith (1988) suggested that prediction is a perfectly natural activity and people, including children, do it constantly. Smith argued strongly that "prediction is the core of reading" (p. 18). On the other hand, some students, perhaps all at first, need substantial direct instruction in making predictions. During direct instruction, in Durkin's (1989) description, the instructor tells, shows, models, asks questions, and demonstrates the competence to be learned. The process of gradually revealing text by using an opaque sheet over a page suggested by Haggard works effectively for students working with a basal selection. However, more powerful direct instruction for a group, especially one initiating

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work focused on predicting, can be undertaken using an overhead projector.

The reading teacher has several advantages in using an overhead in developing prediction strategies: 1. the amount of text revealed is controlled by the instructor, 2. the teacher can be sure that all students are seeing the same text, 3. the teacher can list student predictions on a chalkboard while the text is revealed, 4. the teacher can more readily model prediction strategies, and 5. the instructor can call attention to special features in the text such as cues and vocabulary.

The teacher can ask general questions such as "What do you think will happen next?" or more text dependent questions like "Do you think the tiger will be fooled by the boys' trick?" The line of questioning is important because prediction strategies, in young children especially, will evolve from responses to questions. The focal point remains constant: prediction instruction involves study in constructing meaning from text. The teacher needs to guide students in understanding how these predictions evolve from the text. In other words, is a particular prediction based on a reasonably solid foundation in the text? When the text is revealed students and teacher can compare what the author actually wrote with what they predicted. This active interaction with the author is a highly beneficial approach to constructing meaning. Readers are kept within the restraints of the message read while enriching that message with their own knowledge. This procedure encourages discipline in

comprehension and attending to Durkin's (1989) advice that "comprehending is not a matter of constructing any message that a reader feels like constructing (p.11).

Procedures

Selection of material is very important. A short selection with an easily followed story line is recommended, especially at first. Folktales from a wide variety of sources work well. Teacher written stories work very well. Teachers can write stories using settings familiar to the children and include the names of children in the class. Old folk tales and fables can be modified. Teacher preparation avoids problems with copyright restrictions. Spontaneous copying is permissible under the "fair use" provisions of Public Law 94-4553, 1978. However, provisions of this law require that materials be used only one time and with one class. On the other hand, permission for using material several times can be obtained from publishers. A good source is the publisher of the basal currently in use in the system. The publisher will likely be willing to release materials from earlier series and even from the one currently in use provided that a clear description of how the material will be used and the rationale for using it on an overhead is provided.

Preparation of transparencies requires obtaining a good clear copy of the material. The copy must be passed through a copying machine capable of making transparencies such as 3M thermal transparency maker or a xerographic copier such as those manufactured by Xerox, IBM, and Minolta to name but a few. The copy then should be checked for clarity and sharpness by projecting it on an overhead projector. All lettering should be at least one-fourth inch high.

Mounting your transparencies will serve several purposes, 1) the transparency will lay flat on the projection surface glass, 2) a sharper, cleaner image will be presented since excess light will be blocked out, and 3) the mount will provide room for writing notes concerning the individual transparency. Sometimes the image is too small. This problem can be solved by enlarging the original material using a xerographic machines capable of enlarging, such as the Minolta 4507.

Overhead transparencies desired for future use need to be protected and stored in a manner that will permit efficient retrival. Some suggestions are:

Mounted and unmounted transparencies can be three hole punched and then stored in quality binders. It is highly advisable to interface each transparency with a sheet of protective paper. These separators can also serve for related notes. The binders can also be used to store related course outlines, lecture notes, and handouts.

Transparencies can be stored in a file cabinet. However, it is critical that you tape a blank protective sheet of paper to the bottom or left edge of the mount so that your transparency will not be scratched or damaged while in storage. Business and library supply stores can provide manilla envelopes designed for effectively storing transparencies.

There are many commercial plastic and metal boxes designed for storing transparencies. Most of these come with a lid and handle, are easily portable, and provide a high level of security.

There are numerous ways to make and store transparencies. The key is to make good transparencies and store them so they are safe and conveniently retrieved. A word of caution: be careful when storing and transporting transparencies, especially in a car, since excessive heat will damage them.

Conclusion

The overhead projector is a valuable tool for enhancing instruction involving prediction. The process of gradually revealing text to a group of students, eliciting their predictions, evaluating their predictions, and then either confirming or gently refuting these predictions is a valuable learning activity. Further, it is a most enjoyable learning experience.

Procedures described for developing and storing transparencies can insure a substantial and ever evolving supply of high quality materials. The use of good reading materials presented on well-prepared overheads provides a rich instructional base for enhancing prediction competencies.

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